

First Paper:  
Essay on

**Christos Yannaras**  
**“The Freedom of Morality”** <sup>(1)</sup>

by  
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**Introduction:**

Given the wide range of topics in this book, each with several strands that range from inter-winding to conflicting with each other, I felt that a wide-angle introduction is warranted, so that we don't miss the forest for the trees. Commenting on ideas that are smeared out though the book as well as his other writings was not an easy task, yet it was necessary. Such general comments are presented here with limited references to specific pages; specific references were reserved for the selective detailed analysis that followed.

For several months, I wondered what to say about this book; my view about it is very different from my view about Yannaras in his “An Orthodox Comment on ‘The Death of God’ ” <sup>(2)</sup> (a copy of that essay is attached). In my previous essay, I valued his clarity about the distinctions between the Orthodox Church and the “Western Churches”; and his bravery of highlighting it in this age of attempted ecumenism.

It was a struggle understanding why do I have two different reactions towards two writings by this same author. In both cases he was consistent in presenting his overall view of existentialist freedom within the framework of the Orthodox Church that represents and relates to intrinsic life in its deepest meaning within “Man”! Why was it so palatable with “An Orthodox Comment on ‘The Death of God’ ”, albeit with some reservations, but so confusing, and at times repulsive, with “The Freedom of Morality”? Why was it a struggle reading the later; even before reaching his political-opportunistic declarations about the Jews or his repulsive patriarchal views about women?

Finally, I had an “Eureka” moment: The Devil was in the details; it was in the details of how he envisioned achieving the existential freedom through the Church that he failed. There were no such details in “An Orthodox Comment on ‘The Death of God’ ” in which he addressed only the overall picture. That is where Yannaras shines; his heart, is in the right direction, seeing morality as being identified with the existential truth of “man”; very much in harmony with the roots of the Orthodox Church. His existentialism spoke more eloquently about human freedom and authenticity than did traditional Christian moral theology of the West; and his critique of authoritarian and conventional ethics puts him in tune with today's aspirations.

It is in the details of how he envisions achieving that freedom, that he seems to be confusing (or confused?), out of touch with reality and at some point, outright dangerous:

- His scriptural references, as we will see later, don't seem to correlate well with his intended conclusions.
- His bridging of those gaps by sweeping statements suggests emotional subjectivism on his part.
- Even in his best intentions, critiquing authoritarian ethics and conventional ethics, he risks failing to distinguish between "fallen" modes of moral reflection and well grounded Christian tradition that is compatible with empirical limits of human life.
- His extreme notion of person transcending nature, that our path to theosis must lead to transcending our human nature, brought him dangerously close to Sartre's "There is no human nature". That would lead us to being like the Christ of Arius.

In the end, the way he presented the path to achieving that freedom is so out of touch with reality that it will fail at best, or it will give a bad name to Christianity, at worst. The fact that he was well received in most Orthodox Church circles, is alarming and will be a factor in shaping my future essays on Theology/Science synthesis.

For me, the last straw was when I reached his patriarchal view on the roll of women in the Church (1, pp.100-102) , I wished I could toss this book in the garbage bin (as I did with Lenin book earlier, for a different reason). But it was that strand of truth, in his critique of authoritarian and conventional ethics that kept me interested in and at times sympathetic to his views. It looked near impossible to come up with an over-all description of his thought; on the other hand, a microscopic analysis of his statements was impractical as it would lead to an essay that is larger than the book, and in the process will be without any perspective. Yet there was a compelling reason to take him seriously: The world-wide attention he received from both admirers and critics made him an ideal "weather balloon" for reporting the direction of the "wind" of some Orthodox Church circles, and the "vortices" of conflict with pragmatists, both in the Orthodox Church and in the West. A lot of insight can be gained about the reviewers of the book from what they say about it.

After several months of reflection on this book, on Yannaras' overall writings and on the world-wide reactions about him, an overall picture started to immerge; a picture that will help me refine my future work on a synthesis between the Faith and Quantum Sciences (not just Quantum Physics). Both sides of his writings, successes and failures (in my opinion), will be useful in my future writings:

- From his successes:
  - Ice-breaker: His eloquent presentation of existentialism, about human authentic freedom that is intrinsic within "man", is a great ice-breaker for introducing Christianity to a New Age audience, holistic life style audience or any audience looking for the "meaning of life". "Freedom as love and freedom as knowledge" (Yannaras, 5) (more on the "knowledge" below).
  - Confronting nihilistic existentialism, such as Heidegger's, through Yannaras' ontology of the person.

- Freeing Christ from the earthly kingdom of the Roman Catholic Church, “Rome has proclaimed a Christ who has fallen to Satan’s third temptation”, reining over an earthly kingdom (Dostoyevsky, 4.)
- Short-circuiting, cutting the roots of Western “rationalism” that ended up inviting, and failing to confront, nihilistic science rationalism.
- From what I consider as his failures:
  - “Freedom as love and freedom as knowledge” but “knowledge as we understand it today- that is as information- doesn’t interest me” (Yannaras, 5). By this statement, Yannaras showed total ignorance of the rich theological outcome from the knowledge of information about the cosmos. That knowledge has widened our scope of vision by one hundred trillion times in the last one hundred years alone, leading to enormous Apophacy, humility and cosmic connectivity to God resulting. By missing it categorically, he painted himself in a corner with no escape other than rhetorical slogans. Those who supported him, such as St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary (giving him degree of Doctor of Divinity with unqualified praise), painted themselves in the same corner too. What I learn from that is:
    - There is an extreme need to research and publicize the connectivity of Quantum Sciences with theology.
    - Given how distant are Churches and schools of theology from that goal, it would be more appropriate to pursue such work in collaboration with the scientific community rather than Churches or theology schools; in the end, presenting it to them on a “plate of gold”.
- Once the necessity of “knowledge as information” is established, and its fruit is harvested, it would be easier to value objective moral analysis, based on objective quality to human life.

Then, and only then, we will be closer to Christ in His dual nature rather than skirting dangerously on the boundary of Arianism.

## **The bright side: Freedom:**

It is an intrinsic feeling that freedom is what gives human life its value. Like the postulates of geometry, it is a self-evident that doesn’t need justification; from which all moral arguments emerge. Is Christianity compatible with freedom? Or to the contrary, does it demand obedience with total abdication of freedom? St Paul seems to think it is the former: “the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21).; yet while observing obedience to the will of God (the Lord prayer).

Yannaras addresses liberty as freedom from the bounds of the world (1, pp. 65-76): Asceticism, rejecting enslavement to the temptations of the world is the way for uniting the human being with his true nature. Indeed, that view becomes evident when contrasted with narcissism: “Narcissism: Denial of the True Self”, according to Alexander Lowen, M.D. (3, cover page). In his “An Orthodox Comment on ‘The Death of God’ ” (3), Yannaras made it clear freedom from the bounds of the world includes freedom from the rigid forms of Christianity: He started by warning against abusing the word “Orthodoxy” by using it to cover up by rigid and timid mindedness by people who boast about faithfulness to what is genuine and authentic. That leads to definite formulations objectifying the truth. That contradicts the “apophaticism” of the ecclestial truth and ends up defeating the purpose of the faith. He states that the formulation is simply a boundary or border of truth, a “garment” or “guard” of truth. Therefore, knowledge of the truth is not attained by comprehension of the formulations, but with the sharing in the event of truth, in the truth of life, in the immediate experience.

However, I have a lingering concern: How far can we push “freedom from the bounds of the world” without falling into Sartre’s “There is no human nature” and with it the Christ of Arius?

### **The Masks of Morality and the Ethos of the Person** (1, pp. 13- 27 )

Yannaras questions authoritative ethics and conventional ethics. He disqualifies the first as it is a slippery slope leading towards totalitarianism, even if started as “divine” authority. And he concludes that the second will end up being diluted as social ethics on based utilitarian grounds that shifts with the wind. These are superficial forms of morality masking “man” being from his own self. (1, pp.12-13)

According to Yannaras, “...in the tradition of the Orthodox East, the problem of human morality has always been identified with the existential truth of man”. (1, p.15). So far, that sounds too abstract to relate to daily life. So, he tries to connect it with core Faith principles:

- God the Father is “He who is” (Ex 3:14). God is the ultimate reality and being.
- The ethos of Trinitarian communion. (1, p. 16) is a communion of love: “God is Love” (1 Jn 4:16). Therefore, the ethos of love is united with being.

The above is projected on “man”: Since the ethos of “man” is “in the image” of God, then ethos or morality is united with being. These are golden words, very much in agreement with : “Narcissism: Denial of the True Self”, according to Alexander Lowen, M.D. That would be a good introduction to the wider audience mentioned above.

The only problem is how do we translate that into daily life.

While Dr. Alexander Lowen elaborates on the harm that narcissism does to the quality of life of the person, and how to connect with the true self, Yannaras continues with further abstractions:

- An “individual” doesn’t become a “person” unless he/ she recognizes the distinctiveness of the person.
- Since that distinctiveness is in the image of God, then the ethos of the Trinitarian life is imprinted on the human being. That is love.
- Failure to follow that will lead to a “law” that leads to nowhere.

Yannaras heart is on the mark, but there is no prescription of how to translate that into daily life application. Instead, Yannaras elaborates further on ethos as existential necessity:

### **Sin: Existential Failure and “Missing the Mark”** (1, pp29-48)

“Man” falls from true life to mere survival when he denounces the morality that is in his nature as being in the image of God. The person dies when he ceases to love and to be loved. The lesson learned from the fall following “In the day ye eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, ye shall be gods” (Gen. 3:5) is that his true nature is not in his self-sufficiency, but in transcending the mortality of his nature into answering God’s call into personal communion with Himself.

Believing in self-sufficiency in this world is the origin sin. And sin is “missing the mark”. Yannaras lists several references from patristic tradition in support of this statement. The question of practicality remains: How convincing would that be to the general public? Yannaras suggests that “conscious recognition of sin can be used in the Church to lead us into recognizing our human inadequacy and seeking the grace of God” (1, p.39).

I wonder how useful that would be in a Church with dwindling membership.

That is where synthesis with modern science comes to the rescue: There is ample evidence that even in the cosmos at large, there is no self-sufficiency; God's hand is at work all the time, everywhere. Once the cosmic connection is established, using a phrase like "missing the mark" would be more acceptable to the public than the inherently judgmental "good" and "evil". By the way, the last word "evil" in the Lord Prayer "bishaa" in the original Aramaic language, means "unripeness", "inappropriate action", that delays or diverts us from advancing. (3, p. 35)

### **The Gospel's Rejection of Individual Ethics** (1, pp. 49-64)

Yannaras sees morality, according to the Church, as an existential fact exhibited by the early Church as testified by written testimony of the first apostolic community. (1, p.49)

One would expect to see that followed by how was that a result of the foundation of the Faith, instead, Yannaras lists foundations of the Faith: Foundation in Christ "...the Word" (Lk. 1:2); eternity of Church "... and forever" (Heb. 13:8); Trinitarian mode of existence; but no clear indication on how did that lead to the rejection of individual ethics by the early Church community. The way he put it is more compatible with an abstract vision of the Faith rather than a true existential fact. It seems to me that his use of "existential" here was just a slogan.

It seems that the link between the Faith and rejection of individual ethics is missing, until he names love as the link. That indeed the only viable link, but unfortunately he addresses it as a commandment: "The commandment of love is the "fulfilling of the Law" (Rom 13:10)" (1, p.56). He goes on to list more references that add up to more commandments. Once again, that doesn't look like a convincing existential argument for today's audience: It would have helped to elaborate more on Christ's sacrifice for us; to build up our gratitude to Christ, then to show how our selfless love would be a repayment in gratitude to Christ. I didn't see that emphasis in his writing, and I think it is a missing link.

### **A Historical Example: The Challenge of the "Fools for Christ"** (1, pp. 65-75)

Yannaras presents an extensive historical survey on "foolishness for Christ" as the epic of freedom from the bounds of the world, yet while being submerged in the world. The "fools for Christ" have a particular gift of the Holy Spirit that gives them one of "the most acute forms of prophetic preaching". The fool in Christ is an ascetic who does not bound himself to the secure life of a monastery, but lives alone in the world and bringing virtue to it at ground level. As an example, St Symeon kept company with the city's prostitutes and even danced with them in the streets as a way to connect with them at their level.

The selfless love of the fool for Christ knows no bounds:

- He is ready to take on himself another's guilt as an expression of total interconnectedness of humanity.
- He is totally selfless; totally abandons his ego; that gives him the freedom to challenge secularized authority. He rejects fame and runs away from the praise of men so that he can be closer to God.

I can not agree with Yannaras more that fools in Christ are God's counter-balancing act in periods of secularization among Christians, where the Christian identity seems to depend on the conventional standards and ideas of the world. Indeed, fools in Christ have been the final compass of guidance in times of confusion and loss of direction. They are a phenomena that transcends Christianity into all other religions and cultures: he "Darwysh, fool for God" in Islam, the "Sage" in Taoism (6), the "Shaman" in native American cultures, the "Yogi" in Hinduism. I practiced "Transcendental Meditation" at Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (7) school, and to this breed of men I bow with utmost respect

Without them, the world would have been lost a long time ago, They were able to confront a world gone astray, but it was still a world that believed in what is beyond. That is not how the world is today: It is a world that believes that it is self-contained, that the cosmos follows laws of its own, at least in principle. Today, the behavior of the fool for Christ as described by Yannaras, can land him in mental hospital. A new breed of fools for Christ is needed: A fool who can penetrate today's science at its highest level; point out God's hand in it with convincing arguments; while, simultaneously, performing down-to-earth achievements that gains him the public's respect for his common-sense. Yet, still preserving all the other characteristics of the traditional fool of unlimited selfless love and personal sacrifice. That is fool who is much harder to find than the traditional fools; but we are in more challenging times that put higher demands on the fools. This is the fool I am looking for.

### **The Morality of the Church- A Liturgical Ethos** (1, pp. 77- 88)

Yannaras traces the foundation of morality of the Church to the confrontation of fear of individual guilt, based on the sacrifice of Christ: "He that taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). A whole structure of liturgy is built on that which gathers those who were scattered and lost otherwise. A cornerstone of the liturgical process towards that end, is the Eucharist which is the New Covenant.

"... Christianity which divides morality from being, and piety from the truth of existence and life, necessarily leads into an autonomous absolute" (1, p.87).

More elaboration on it in:

### **The Kingly, Priestly and Prophetic Ethos of the Eucharist** (1, pp. 89-107)

That is all great in principle, but how does it translate into reality? The Eucharist, when one internalizes it, can transform the individual into a person. But how many people really internalize it? For many, it is just a ritual that they accept mechanically without entering their hearts, thus becoming just a rubber-stamp approving their behavior as is; giving them the illusion of self-rightness.

The rest of the book is an elaboration on the above-mentioned issues; I will address them briefly.

### **Pietism as an Ecclesiological Heresy** (1, pp. 119- 136)

Yannaras exposes "Pietism" as it presents itself as a mystical piety that is ultimately opposed to "dogma". Here Yannaras swings back in favor of dogma. But it not clear where do we draw the line between following the dogma and avoiding authoritarian morality.

Where do we draw the line between avoiding "the individualistic 'culture' of pietism" (1, p.127) and following the "existential truth of man"?

It looks fuzzy here, but at least he is trying to an issue in Protestantism that we should be aware of.

### **The Ethical Character of the Mysteries** (1, pp. 137- 172)

As a response to "pietism", Yannaras reverts to the secure base of "sacraments". Sacraments offered by the Church provide the security and unity that the individualistic "pietism" fails to secure. In principle, "sacraments" have mysterious powers that don't need to be analyzed by human logic. They are connected to life which is mysterious by its very nature.

However, the effectiveness of “sacraments” is dependent on the sincerity of the recipients. For many, “sacraments” are just rituals that they accept mechanically without entering their hearts, thus becoming just like a rubber-stamp approving their behavior as is; giving them the illusion of self-rightness.

### **The Church Canons and the Limits Set to Life** (1, pp. 173-193)

Yannaras presents a historical account of the evolution of Church canons to reach the conclusion that it is related to life but does not follow the immediate whims of life. “They are regulations, yet they do not constitute “law”. They mark the limits of morality, but without making it subject the logistics of individual evaluations. They impose penances, yet these are not penalties to atone for guilt but means for healing” (1, p.191). They are like life on the long run (my interpretation).

But the fact that canons have been built through a past era of the Church, raises the question of whether they are still applicable today. Yannaras sees that their antinomy precludes them from being subject to modern “scientific” criteria. (1, p.191). Yannaras sees one remaining solution: The common sense judgement of the bishop as it has been in the Orthodox tradition “We have decreed that the local bishop shall have authority to exercise clemency”.

In the end, it is a canon with an allowance for some situational relativism subject to the common sense of the bishop. That seems like a fair reflection of life.

However, I wouldn’t give up on modern scientific criteria if built within the framework of Quantum Sciences; but that is a long way into the future given that Quantum Biology is still in its infancy and its impact on sociology will be much later.

### **The Historical and Social Dimensions of the Church’s Ethos** (1, pp. 195- 229)

Yannaras tries to respond to the long expected question: “do not the ethics of the Orthodox Church result merely in an abstract idealism or mysticism, a subjective experience unrelated to the immediate reality of life, to its social and historical realization?” (1, p.195) This question arises from the fact that secular human rights movements and material improvements in living conditions have achieved in a few decades more than what Christianity achieved in two millennia.

After a long chain of explanations of what the Church’s communal ethos is and what it is not, he reaches the conclusion that: “The communal ethos of the Church is not an abstract ethical theory, nor a system of values codified into commandments. It is the fact of the eucharist and its extension to the universal dimension of life, the dynamic realization of personal distinctiveness and freedom in the context of the encounter between human effort and divine grace” (1, p. 229)

I agree with his definition of the communal ethos of the Church, but his opening question remains an answered. He did not succeed in refuting the accusation that “the ethics of the Orthodox Church result merely in an abstract idealism or mysticism”; he just rephrased it in a nicer package and presented it as what he seems to think of as an answer. Does he really think that he answered the question?

He did not respond effectively to the fact that secular human rights movements and material improvements in living conditions have achieved in a few decades more than what Christianity achieved in two millennia.

I wish he noted that the success of secular humanism was precisely because of the foundations laid down

by the Church over the past two millennia! The Church created the “potential energy” of society, by elevating it into spiritual heights; while secular humanism spent the “potential energy” into “kinetic energy” exhibited in material success, by rolling society down the hill.

The problem will be when society reaches the bottom of the valley; its kinetic energy ends and its potential energy has already been spent. That is why, a new way of elevating society is urgently needed: A revival of the Faith in the middle of this scientific age by tapping into the spiritual side of Quantum Sciences.

### **The Ethos of Liturgical Art** (1, pp. 231- 264)

Liturgical art, both in architecture and in iconography, “reflects the ontological content of the eucharist-eucharistic communion as a mode of existence” (1, p. 231)/

In his presentation of contribution of liturgical art to the ethos of the Church, Yannaras goes into lengthy descriptions and arguments which, I find, are mostly unnecessary slogans and rhetoric. I would summarize it as:

#### Architecture:

- In the West, Gothic architecture is based on a fixed skeleton plan made of ribbed piers elevated upwards (1, p. 241). “It expresses a demand for the earthly to be elevated to the transcendent” (1, p. 243) . The skeletal ribs, forming a rigid skeleton, represent the rigid rules of the Church.
- In ancient Greece, the temple was built according to certain proportional harmony rules, that expresses the Greek view of the world as a given harmony and order. (1, pp. 246-247)
- Byzantine architecture focuses on domes and arches that expresses “the movement of the incarnation, of God’s descent into the world, the movement of the “bowed heaven” (“He bowed the heavens and came down”, Ps. 17.9)” (1, p. 247).. Indeed, the church of Holy Wisdom in Constantinople was the first example of a large dome ever! It is still presented in structural engineering books today!

#### Iconography:

- “Religious art in Europe (*in the West*), is dominated by the “naturalistic” or, better, “photographic” representation of “sacred” persons, places or objects. The “sacredness” of what is depicted lies exclusively in the theme, the given meaning of the subject matter, and the allegorical or ontological way the viewer will interpret it” (1, p. 253. The words in italics are mine)
- The Byzantine icon, on the other hand, is based on the ancient Greek art . That art did not aim at a “photographic” representation of the natural prototype, but at the “abstraction” of the individual and surroundings to attain a direct vision into its “reason”. (1, p. 253)

So, in both architecture and in iconography, Byzantine art aims at the essence rather than the superficial appearance: Domes flowing down from Heaven, and persons and objects represented by their essence.

Yannaras concluded this topic nicely, except for to issues where he expressed ignorance about science and technology:



- “Technology now comes between man and the world, replacing the personal attainment of art with the impersonal product of machine” (1, p. 232) . It seems that Yannaras has no idea of how buildings are designed today: They are not designed by machines but by architects and engineers. The architect strives to express the subject matter into artistic form. It is up to the Church to instruct him into following whatever theme the Church wants. The engineer, by utilizing modern construction techniques, can give the architect and the Church far more flexibility of expression than what ancient construction techniques did.
- Yannaras claims that “Byzantines built their domes without using a form, building freely in the void. Thus the natural material loses all weight, all artificial support; ...” (1, p. 248) . This is not possible; domes need temporary support until the very top stone is in place. I assume that Yannaras did not make up this claim; most likely he fell victim to a myth created by the Church to imply that even its stones were spiritual. By reporting it as is without verification with specialists in this field, Yannaras loses a lot of credibility in the objective sense.

**But the most troubling issues with Yannaras are the following two that I will end this paper with:**

### **The liturgical celebration of life and the distinction between the sexes** (1, p.100-102)

Yannaras by emphasizing that “the division of human beings into sexes is transcended. This means that the priestly ethos and rank is not exclusive prerogative of the male sex”. “The differentiation of the sexes does not represent an ontological distinction”. “The differentiation between the sexes is a differentiation in natural energies “which no longer looks to the divine archetype” but merely foreshadows the fall”. (1, p.100). Then he proceeds to list great contribution of women in the Church, starting by the Mother of God; all are statements that would lead to the expectation that Yannaras would announce his support for ordination of priestesses in the Orthodox Church.

Suddenly he slaps us with a statement that is the exact opposite to the above: “If, therefore, the Orthodox Church gives the special grace of priesthood, the possibility of celebrating the eucharist and other mysteries, or sacraments, to men alone, this is not because she belittles the female sex or wishes to maintain social inequality. It is because she has complete respect for the truth of man and his nature, and remains faithful to it, because the salvation which she herself represents is no abstract moralism unrelated to the existential reality of nature” (1, p.102)

What is it in “the truth of man and his nature” that says he is the only one who can celebrate the eucharist? Where did it come from?

What in “the existential reality of nature” that makes celebrating the eucharist exclusive to men? Particularly, where is the “existential” connected to it?

What a mockery of logic, giving a statement with no roots or justification! Does he really believe what he is saying?

What a mockery of the word “existential”! He abused it so much as to empty it from its meaning. And then he is called existential thinker!

I would have respected him better if he sited practical considerations such as current cultural biases and social inertia that need time to go away. But to make it an eternal truth, is unforgivable.

For those who site such practical considerations, I would urge them to get out of it as soon as possible; not by masculinising women as “feminists” advocate, but by “feminizing the world”- bringing it closer to a balanced point between the masculine and feminine for the following reasons:

- Femininity is written in nature, according to modern science: Quantum Physics is “Whimsical” compared to the “Deterministic” classical physics that has been left in the dust by the new whimsical/feminine oriented science.
- Patriarchal views have been responsible for so many wars and destruction. While the world managed to recover from previous wars, the wars of the future will not be survivable, given the apocalyptic power of today’s weaponry. Feminizing the world is more likely to lead to world peace.
- Women are more environmental friendly; they drive smaller cars, spend less energy, and some of the most effective pioneers of the environment are women (including the first head of state to order environmental assessment, and the first vote major corporate vote in favor of the environment). Feminizing the world would lead to a better protection of the environment, which is now badly needed to avert an environmental apocalypse.
- Liberation of women leads to reducing population explosion with its environmental destructiveness.

That is what I would say to those who still cling to patriarchal modes of society, out of inertia and short-term practical considerations.

But to Yannaras, who believes that women shouldn’t be ordained because of “the existential reality of nature” as an eternal truth, I would say that the sneaky way he tried to sell that to us is so repulsive that I wished I could toss his book in the garbage bin.

Does he really think we can't see his contradictions? Does he really believe what he says? The matters of pp.100-103 made it very hard for me to have any real respect for Yannaras.

And another troubling issue with Yannaras:

### **The Hebrews according to Yannaras:** (1, pp. 83-84)

Here, Yannaras inserts a surprising statement about the Hebrews: “... their knowledge of the true God and of His will, are guaranteed not by individual piety or virtues but by the primary fact that the Hebrews belong to the chosen people ...”, “... enabling them to participate and remain in the body of God’s people through their way of life.” (1, p.83). “Like the Old Covenant, God’s New Covenant with man does not confine itself to a set of duties for the individual but transfers man’s *mode of existence* from individuality to community and communion” (1, p. 84).

He moves on to present the New Covenant, but without any mention of that the Old Covenant came with conditions that the Hebrews violated.

What happened to: “The days are surly coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the house of Egypt- **a covenant that they broke**, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts...”. (Jer 31:31. The red

highlight is mine). Here God decides that He will start the act of salvation Himself. A promise of the Savior to come.

What happened to the parable of the wicked tenants (Mt. 21:33-41)?

“21:34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. 21:35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.”, “21:38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. 21:39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.” (King James Bible)

What happened to: “... you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, **not on tablets of stone** but on tablets of human hearts ... for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life ...” (Co 3:3-11. Red highlight is mine). Paul describes the old covenant as the “ministry of condemnation” while the new covenant as the “ministry of justification”

Does Yannaras read the Bible? Or is his political opportunism, appeasing the Hebrews at the expense of the truth of the Bible, is too great to miss?

Is he so frightened of being labeled “anti-Semitic”, a label that can cut his support in the West, too frightening to fight? Couldn't he have listed the truth of the Bible, as is, then noted that there is nothing anti-Semitic about it since Christ himself and all his disciples were Semitic? Is this how Yannaras sets an example of confronting fear by relying on the truth of Christ?

What a shame! And what a weakness in Yannaras' character!

## **Conclusion:**

Yannaras' heart is in the right direction: Looking for morality in the Church as an existential reality. However, that was weakened by his ignorance of modern science that led him to discard “knowledge as information”. By that, he limited his morality to morality of love, with only rhetorical morality of knowledge. The result was a lopsided morality that is too dependent on transcending nature; that brought him too close to the Christ of Arius. But I would sympathize with his honest attempts to secure morality on intrinsic solid foundations; I understand that his misinformation about information is not his fault: it is a prevailing misconception in society at large; modern scientists have to do a better job in informing the public.

But Yannaras disappoints me in the way he tries to buy his way into acceptance by the patriarchs of the Church and by the media of the West: His opposition to ordination of priestesses and his distortion of Old Testament covenant. In both cases he comes across as an opportunist vying for acceptability and political correctness. Even in his other areas, his arguments don't seem to lead to his conclusions. He just compiles a lot of material and presents it in a way that suggests its connectivity; but under scrutiny, it doesn't seem to be connected. As if he tries to bluff his way by pseudo arguments.

Because of all the above, he looked to me as either being totally divorced from reality, deliberately deceptive or both.

The fact that he was well received in many Orthodox circles as well as in several academic institutions, both East and West, is an eye-opener about the state of those entities. Based on that, I have already changed my plans for my future theological work: It will be more connected with the scientific-Christian

community rather than the likes of the entities that welcomed Yannaras. He was a very valuable “weather balloon” for me.

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